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A BRIEF FOR BOSWELL

The Boswells are, indisputably, an ancient and honorable family. One or more of them came to England with William the Conqueror, fought at Hastings, and later, exhibited the acquisitiveness which was common to the followers of that illustrious spoiler. In the reign of David I, the Boswells, animated still by the Norman instinct, entered Scotland. As far back as the year 1504 the Manor or Barony of Auchinleck (Affleck) in Ayrshire, having fallen to the crown, it pleased his Majesty, James IV of Scotland, to grant the same unto Thomas Boswell, described by his descendant, the famous biographer, as "a branch of an ancient family in the County of Fife," and styled in the royal charter *dilecto familiari nostro*. The cause of the grant was *pro bono et fideli servitio nobis praestito*. It is intimated, rather than asserted, that this Thomas Boswell was the chief minstrel of James IV, a statement which, if proved, might in a measure account for the inclination of James Boswell to sing the praises of great men. At all events Thomas Boswell continued to render good and faithful service, and fell at the fatal field of Flodden, in the year 1513. I think Carlyle refers to him somewhere as a "fiddler."

It is pleasant to know that a great-grandfather of James Boswell was Earl of Kincardine, through whom, in some way, theoretically at least, the biographer was descended from Robert Bruce, a fact which he was at no pains to conceal. There are many other interesting and important incidents in the history of the family and estate, recorded by James Boswell, which for want of space I deny myself the pleasure of repeating.

In due course of time and descent, the estate of Auchinleck became vested in the father of James Boswell, known in literary history as "Auld Auchinleck," and by Carlyle styled "Old Touchwood," and "Old Sulphur Brand." He was a Judge, a man of strong mind and character and of no less strong prejudices, and had many natural and emphatic disapprovals of his son's character and conduct. He seems to have been a fair match for Dr. Johnson, both in entertaining and in asserting prejudices.

I had hoped to find somewhere in the later history of the Bos-

wells a French marriage, but there seems to have been none after the Conquest. There was a Dutch alliance, but that does not account for the essentially Gallic character of many things in Boswell's "Life of Johnson," unless indeed, the Sommelsdycks had French blood. There are many passages in the great biography that remind one of Victor Hugo's proneness to write odes to his toothaches, and of Rousseau's apparent pleasure in relating disgusting things of himself.

No doubt it is vanity that causes Frenchmen to write private memoirs, preserving for the benefit of posterity records of how and when they cut their nails, and other similar and, ordinarily, esoteric personal facts. The Scotch also have vanity, but it is a shy, sensitive, retiring vice or virtue, and therefore, if neither the Boswells nor the Sommelsdycks had French blood in their veins, there seems to have been, in the case of James Boswell, an inexplicable malformation, or at least modification of the vanity.

James Boswell was born at Edinburgh, October 29, 1740, and died in London, June 19, 1795. He had his academic training at Edinburgh, and studied law at Utrecht. In 1786, he published "An Account of Corsica, with Memoirs of General Paoli;" in 1769, "British Essays in favor of Brave Corsicans;" in 1777-82, a series of papers called "The Hypochondriac;" in 1790, "The Life of Johnson." In 1857, certain letters of his to the Rev. W. J. Temple were published.

An event in the life of James Boswell more important, probably, in his own estimation, than his birth, was his introduction to Samuel Johnson, which occurred on the 16th of May, 1763, in London, in Mr. Davies' back parlor after tea and unexpectedly, as accurately recorded by Mr. Boswell as soon as his nervous system had recovered from the shock. Boswell says that Johnson unexpectedly came into the shop, and Mr. Davies, "having preceded him through the glass door, announced his awful approach to me somewhat in the manner of an actor in the part of Horatio. . . 'Look, my Lord, it comes.' Mr. Davies mentioned my name and respectfully introduced me to him. I was much agitated; and recollecting his prejudice against the Scotch, of which I had heard much, I said to Davies, 'Don't tell

him where I came from.' 'From Scotland,' cried Mr. Davies roguishly. 'Mr. Johnson,' said I, 'I do indeed come from Scotland, but I cannot help it.' This, Boswell says, was meant to placate Johnson, and he was therefore taken aback by the reply, "That sir, I find, is what a very great many of your countrymen cannot help." "That stroke stunned me a good deal," says Boswell with great satisfaction over the stunning. After this the party sat down, and presently Johnson, making complaint of Garrick for refusing him a pass to the theatre for Miss Williams, Boswell being measurably recovered and still bent on placation said, "O, sir, I cannot think Mr. Garrick would grudge such a trifle to you." "Sir," said Johnson with a stern look, "I have known David Garrick longer than you have done, and I know of no right you have to talk to me on the subject." This rebuke Boswell admits he deserved, and adds that he was much mortified and, worse than that, feared that his hope of obtaining an acquaintance was blasted. He adds that his final success was due to the fact that his ardor was uncommonly strong and his resolution uncommonly persevering. He remained upon the field not wholly discomfited, and enjoyed the double reward of hearing some of Johnson's conversation and of making a minute of it immediately afterwards. For a little while towards the end of this conversation Boswell was alone with Johnson and rejoiced in the fact that he was treated civilly.

Knowing Johnson and knowing Boswell one is tempted to say that this account of the first meeting of the two is the one perfect bit of narrative in the language and altogether the most exquisite thing in our literature. It is to be noticed that Boswell was offended, or at least complained, but was consoled by the assurance of Davies that Johnson liked him. The justification for this assurance, at that time, is not easily discovered.

On Tuesday, the 24th day of May, Boswell having been enlivened and stimulated by the conversation of certain "witty friends," screwed his courage to the sticking place and, as he puts it, "boldly repaired to Johnson." A courteous reception delighted him. He found Johnson in a rusty brown suit of clothes, a little old shriveled and powdered wig, his shirt neck and the knees of his breeches loose, his worsted stockings ill

drawn up, and his feet thrust into unbuckled shoes instead of slippers. Other persons were present and when they rose to depart, Boswell did likewise, but Johnson requested him to remain. Whereupon, Boswell complying, said, "It is benevolent to allow me to sit and hear you." To this palpable compliment Johnson made reply, "Sir, I am obliged to any man who visits me," which no doubt was true and particularly true of men like Boswell who are of a kind most acceptable after all to great conversers. I am not of the number who deny all intelligence to Boswell, but generally it was true that he could cause Johnson's conversation to flow, without ever obstructing, materially at least, its steady and powerful current.

Of this second meeting and conversation a prompt minute was made, from which it appears that as Boswell went away, Johnson shook hands with him, thereby, as Boswell ingenuously declares, causing the visitor no little elation.

On the thirteenth day of June following there was another proudly recorded hand-shaking. There were more visits and meetings, but just how many, at this time, I do not know. In an article on Johnson in *The Outlook*, Mr. Birrell states that he is afraid to say how few times Boswell saw Johnson, and the argument of the article is to show by Miss Burney, Mrs. Piozzi, and other contemporary authors, that we get from Boswell a correct impression of Johnson. I find it stated that between 1763 and 1785 Boswell saw nothing of Johnson, except during a dozen visits to London. It is said that counting these visits and the time covered by the journey, Boswell's actual association with Johnson was only 276 days during the twenty years of their acquaintance. Moreover, Johnson was fifty-four years old, and in the enjoyment of his pension and of his beloved indolence, when the auspicious event of May 16, 1763, occurred.

On the 30th of April, 1773, Boswell was admitted to the literary club. This was the honor which at that time he coveted most, and for it, unquestionably, he was indebted to Johnson, although it seems that Beauclerk, instigated by Johnson, was his most active supporter. It is known that some of the members were opposed to him, but afterwards he made himself more acceptable by his good humor and obliging disposition. It was

about this time that the plan of enlarging the club was considered. Goldsmith said, "We have travelled over each other's minds," which remark Dr. Johnson promptly repelled, so far as his own mind and Goldsmith's were concerned. Boswell has kept alive the fame of the members of the club, but of the club itself, he has very little to say, presumably because he was forbidden to gossip about its affairs.

Boswell has given us an estimate of himself which may be assigned to this year. He says: "Think of a gentleman of ancient blood, the pride of which was his predominant passion. He was then in his thirty-third year and had been about four years happily married. His inclination was to be a soldier, but his father, a respectable Judge, had pressed him into the profession of the law. He had travelled a good deal and had seen many varieties of human life. He had thought more than anybody had supposed, and had a pretty good stock of general learning and knowledge. He had all Dr. Johnson's principles with some degree of relaxation. He had rather too little than too much prudence; and his imagination being lively, he often said things of which the effect was very different from the intention. He resembles sometimes, 'The best good man, with the worst natur'd muse'."

To one who has started out to vindicate in a measure Boswell's intelligence, this passage presents grave difficulties. But at all events it is amusing and harmless, and the fact remains that Boswell wrote his book. In every emergency his advocate may hold up the book. Moreover, who has never said or written foolish things? Let us remember that it is Boswell's peculiarity to write just what he thought, as other honest and frank people say what they think. Other peculiarities were that he was a hypochondriac, and had what Macaulay called "whimsies," and that he was addicted to attending executions and coming away very much frightened. His escapade at the Shakespeare Jubilee I leave to be related below by Carlyle and Macaulay, merely saying that so far as I can find, there is no proof that he put the words "Corsica Boswell" on his hatband.

The other members of the Boswell family did not approve the conduct of James. Auld Auchinleck, the "respectable Judge," is quoted as referring to General Paoli as a landlouping scoundrel,

and to Johnson as a Dominie who kept a school and called it an Academy.

Alexander Boswell, son of James, who became Sir Alexander, seems to have shared his grandfather's disapproval of the biographer's devotion to Johnson, and to have regarded it as derogating from the family dignity. We can see readily why any kinsman, especially a Scotchman, should have felt thus. I have seen it stated that Sir Alexander was offended if his father's famous book was mentioned in his presence.

It is exceedingly unfortunate for the peace of mind of the family that James Boswell is such an attractive target for rhetoricians. Small and great guns of criticism, rhetoric and declamation have been fired at him incessantly, often it seems from pure wantonness or love of effect. While he lived he was loved by Johnson, but not infrequently, was bullied also by him; he was mimicked and ridiculed by Garrick, sneered at by Beauclerk, and, at times, entreated ill of all the brilliant club whose fame he has preserved. I cannot say that anyone but Johnson treated him kindly or voluntarily sought to serve him, and his tenure of that great man's favor, while stable, was upon hard conditions, at cost of much service and suffering.

The first of the greater writers to speak well of Boswell was Carlyle, who was moved, presumably, by some natural feeling for a fellow Scot and by compassion for the poor fellow's hard lot. The voice of his praise of Boswell as a man is not loud, and is to be heard only between tremendous thundergusts of censorious declamation. I do not think any one would care for praise at all, if compelled to have it in the way in which Carlyle flung it to Boswell, but as to this an opinion may easily be formed from the following extract from Carlyle's *Essay on Boswell's Life of Johnson*.

"Boswell was a person whose mean or bad qualities lay open to the general eye; visible, palpable to the dullest. His good qualities, again, belonged not to the time he lived in, were far from common then; indeed, in such a degree, were almost unexampled; not recognizable, therefore, by everyone; nay, apt even (so strange had they grown) to be confounded with the very vices they lay contiguous to, and had sprung out of. That he was a

wine-bibber and gross liver; gluttonously fond of whatever would yield him a little solacement, were it only of a stomachic character, is undeniable enough. That he was vain, heedless, a babbler; had much of the sycophant alternating with the braggadocio, curiously spiced, too, with an all-pervading dash of the coxcomb; that he gloried much when the tailor, by a court-suit, had made a new man of him; that he appeared at the Shakespeare Jubilee with a ribband, imprinted 'Corsica Boswell' round his hat; and in short, if you will, lived no day of his life without doing and saying more than one pretentious ineptitude; all this, unhappily, is evident as the sun at noon. . . . In that cocked nose, cocked partly in triumph over his weaker fellow-creatures, partly to snuff up the smell of coming pleasure and scent it from afar; in those bag-cheeks, hanging like half-filled wineskins, still able to contain more; in that coarsely protruded shelf-mouth; that fat dew-lapped chin; in all this, who sees not sensuality, pretension, boisterous imbecility enough; much that could not have been ornamental in the temper of a great man's overfed great man (what the Scotch name *flunky*), though it had been more natural there? The under part of Boswell's face is of a low, almost brutish character. . . . The man, once for all, had an open sense, an open loving heart, which so few have; where excellence existed, he was compelled to acknowledge it; was drawn towards it, and (let the old sulphur brand of a Laird say what he liked), *could not but* walk with it,—if not as superior, if not as equal, then as inferior, and lackey; better so than not at all. . . . Boswell wrote a good book because he had a heart and an eye to discern wisdom, and an utterance to render it forth; because of his free insight, his lively talent, above all, of his love and childlike open-mindedness. His sneaking sycophancies, his greediness and forwardness, whatever was bestial and earthy to him, are so many blemishes in his book, which still disturb us in its clearness; wholly hindrances, not helps. Towards Johnson, however, his feeling was not sycophancy, which is the lowest, but reverence, which is the highest of human feelings. None but a *reverent* man (which so unspeakably few are) could have found his way from Boswell's environment to Johnson's. If such worship for real God-made superiors

showed itself also as worship for apparent tailor-made superiors, even as hollow interested mouth-worship for such,— the case, in this composite human nature of ours, was not miraculous, the more was the pity! But for ourselves, let every one of us cling to this last article of faith, and know it as the beginning of all knowledge worth the name; that neither James Boswell's good book, nor any other good thing, in any time or in any place, was, is, or can be, performed by any man in virtue of his *badness*, but always and solely in spite thereof."

Says Macaulay:

"The Life of Johnson is assuredly a great, a very great work. . . . We are not sure that there is in the whole history of the human intellect, so strange a phenomenon as this book. Many of the greatest men that ever lived have written biography. Boswell was one of the smallest men that ever lived, and he has beaten them all. He was, if we are to give any credit to his own account, or to the united testimony of all who knew him, a man of the meanest and feeblest intellect. Johnson described him as a man who had missed his only chance of immortality by not having been alive when the *Dunciad* was written. Beauclerk used his name as a proverbial expression for a bore. He was the laughing-stock of the whole of that brilliant society which has owed to him the greater part of its fame. He was always laying himself at the feet of some eminent man, and begging to be spit upon and trampled upon. He was always earning some ridiculous nickname, and then binding it as a 'crown unto himself,' not merely in metaphor but literally. He exhibited himself, at the Shakespeare Jubilee, to all the crowd which filled Stratford-on-Avon, with a placard around his hat bearing the inscription of 'Corsica Boswell.' In his Tour, he proclaimed to all the world that at Edinburgh he was known by the appellation of Paoli Boswell. Servile and impertinent, shallow and pedantic, a bigot and a sot, bloated with family pride, and eternally blustering about the dignity of a born gentleman, yet stooping to be a tale bearer, an eaves-dropper, a common butt in the taverns of London, so curious to know everybody who was talked about, that, Tory and High-churchman that he was, he manœvered, we have been told, for an introduction to Tom Paine, so vain of the most

childish distinctions, that when he had been to court, he drove to the office, where his book was printing without changing his clothes, and summoned all the printer's devils to admire his new ruffles and sword; such was this man, and such he was content to be. Everything which another man would have hidden, everything the publication of which would have made another man hang himself, was a matter of gay and clamorous exultation to his weak and diseased mind. What silly things he said, what bitter retorts he provoked, how at one place he was troubled with evil presentiments which came to nothing, how at another place on waking from a drunken doze, he read the prayer-book, and took a hair of the dog that had bitten him, how he went to see men hanged and came away maudlin, how he added five hundred pounds to the fortune of one of his babies because she was not scared at Johnson's ugly face, how he was frightened out of his wits at sea, and how the sailors quieted him as they would have quieted a child, how tipsy he was at Lady Cork's one evening, and how much his merriment annoyed the ladies, how impertinent he was to the Duchess of Argyle, and with what stately contempt she put down his impertinence, how Colonel Macleod sneered to his face at his impudent obtrusiveness, how his father and the very wife of his bosom laughed and fretted at his fooleries; all these things he proclaimed to all the world, as if they had been subjects for pride and ostentatious rejoicing. All the caprices of his temper, all the illusions of his vanity, all his hypochondriac whimsies, all his castles in the air, he displayed with a cool self-complacency, a perfect unconsciousness that he was making a fool of himself, to which it is impossible to find a parallel in the whole history of mankind. He has used many people ill, but assuredly he has used nobody so ill as himself."

So much for the two thunderers, the two infallibles, who knew everything and scolded and corrected everybody. Being sorry for Boswell, I am pleased to know that the great enemy of shams could find in him something to praise. Macaulay, unfortunately, puts on a full head of steam whenever he approaches Boswell, and the momentum of his rhetoric is tremendous. There is no place in the midst of so much fine language to insert qualifica-

tions. Such obscure virtues as Boswell, being human, possessed, must go unmentioned.

Let us look at poor Jamie Boswell, forgetting if we can, for the time, how much better we are than he was. No doubt Carlyle was right when he said it was the good in Boswell's character that made him worship Johnson. It was the little good in the little fellow that was attracted by the greater good in the great man.

By birth and education, Boswell was a gentleman. He gained admittance to the bar in Scotland at a time when intelligence and character were regarded as at least appropriate in the profession of law. He was the most familiar friend of the most influential and most respected literary man (who probably was also the best man) in England in his day. He was a member of the club, to which the greatest authors, orators, poets, statesmen, scholars and artists, eagerly sought admission. He was the author of certain minor publications which are not devoid of merit, and finally wrote the book which Carlyle places above all other books of a century of great books. And yet every derogatory, every contemptuous, every scurrilous, every brutal, every envious adjective in our constantly expanding English vocabulary has been hurled at him again and again. His name is buried fathoms deep, as it were, under epithets, derisive, scoffing, insulting, and often false. For a hundred years and more, almost every man and woman who has written of Johnson, or of any other man, or of any thing, in the literary history of his time, has said something bad of Boswell. Carlyle whispers a few approvals of the man along with the most emphatic commendations of his book, and we shall see that a few others have followed him in praises of Boswell more or less qualified.

It is palpably absurd and unjust to make Boswell such a creature as Macaulay depicts, a man of the weakest and feeblest intellect, and yet the closest friend of Johnson, the familiar, or at least tolerated, friend of Burke, Reynolds, Robertson, and many other great and good men, and the author of the best book of biography that ever was written. I am not trying to make a hero of Boswell, but only suggesting with proper diffidence that

he was not so positively inhuman, silly and unworthy, that we must of right or necessity deny him in the future the justice that has been so generally denied him in the past.

I am sure that Boswell did not drink more than Dick Steele, or Dick Sheridan, or Fox, or Daniel Webster; and yet to many rhetoricians he is the typical sot. He did not flatter and bootlick men of rank and power as Dryden did, he seems rather to have fawned on wise and good men; he did not continually change his party and his religion in order to keep the favor of the great; he did not write fifty fulsome, nauseating dedications to as many Lords, mostly worthless, as Dryden did, and yet, he, and not turncoat Dryden, Whig and Tory, Protestant and Catholic, is the prince of sycophants. Morally, he was superior to Shelley and yet the literary world deals most tenderly with the man Shelley, while it only laughs and sneers at Boswell. This is not due to Shelley's genius alone, because Boswell's book also is a work of genius, one of the greater immortals. Boswell was a better man than Byron, and yet for the spice of the devil that was in him, for his good looks, his noble birth, and his Greek histrionics, we treat Byron's faults as venial. For "Highland Mary," and "Tam O'Shanter," and the "Cotter's Saturday Night," we forgive Burns everything.

Rousseau was a writer of almost unsurpassed importance and influence, but as a man he is among the least attractive, certainly among the least admirable. He was emotionalist and sentimentalist, full of fine sentiments and theories, but not less abounding in unmanly and despicable actions, and yet the man Rousseau is somehow much more respected than the much less criminal and not more absurd Boswell. Bacon's infamy has come to be purely rhetorical, although he was the greatest intellect of his time, perhaps of modern times, and justly subject to the severest standards of judgment.

Boswell's fate reminds us of the malefactors, who were first inhumanly punished, and then were buried at the crossroads and their bodies pierced with stakes. Ten thousand jibing, sneering, most contumelious quills have pierced him. We know that it was an ancient custom for every passer to cast a stone upon

the grave of a departed worthy, and thus build his monument. For the one hundred years aforesaid almost every penman in Europe and America who has approached him has flung his adjective at poor "Bozzy."

Boswell is the one man of faults and weaknesses who has done a great thing and been allowed no equitable offset in the estimate of him by posterity. It is very true that the weaknesses of others do not excuse the faults of Boswell, but the lenient judgments rendered against these others are, in a sense, impeachments of public opinion as to Boswell, and the natural sense of fairness is offended by an inequitable apportionment of praise and of censure.

It is the littleness, the unmanliness of Boswell's faults as they have been represented, that we condemn. If his vices had been of a more positive and manly kind he would be more respected. If he had run off with another man's wife, or had written scurrilous pamphlets, or had become a Mohawk, or a tavern brawler, he might, in a measure, have escaped condemnation for meanness and servility. The vices that require physical courage, vices of violence, audacity, and danger, have always commanded a degree of respect, even among civilized people. Every criminal lawyer knows how much easier it is to convict of the unmanly crime of larceny than of the very manly one of homicide. I am not sure but that Boswell might have vindicated himself entirely by a well-conceived and timely homicide. The great writers whom I have quoted, could hardly have found harsher or fiercer words for the condemnation of a homicide than they have applied to the traditionary "ineptitude," "imprinted" on Boswell's hatband at the Shakespeare Jubilee.

Leaving out of consideration the professional jealousy, which has had not a little to do with coloring Boswell's reputation, we must remember that he lived in a scoffing, sceptical, irreverent, gossipy age, when satire, and epigram, and fine phrasing were more cultivated and more esteemed than ever before or afterwards. As Johnson's writings have almost ceased to be read, we should know, but for Boswell's book, almost nothing now about the great philosopher, except what the tattlers tell us of

his scrofula, his abnormal appetite, his savage table manners, his uncouthness, and his hypochondria. It was the age of Chesterfield, but perhaps is best represented in certain respects by Horace Walpole; an age of professional wits and beauties, of a wholly superficial and soulless society. We know how men like Walpole thought or spoke of Johnson, Goldsmith, and Boswell. We get from popular literature the gossip and scandal of the time, and hence the pervading opinion that the writer of the sweetest poems and the author of the best biography in that age so prolific of books were the two greatest fools of their generation. This most enlightened of times, in which we live, owes it to its intelligence to repudiate the gossip of the eighteenth century, usually envious or malicious, or at least to realize that it is gossip and value it accordingly.

No doubt, in time, we shall get out of sound of Johnson's snortings, forget Goldsmith's social absurdities, discredit the "Corsica Boswell" legend, and estimate these remarkable men, as, with Boswell's aid, we already estimate Johnson, according to their essential qualities, and not according to their faults maliciously magnified, and their eccentricities exaggerated and ridiculed.

Let us be just and say boldly that Boswell had not only brains, but genius, or a good substitute for it. We may say it reluctantly, but we shall be unjust and untruthful if we deny it. Shall we say that a man wrote a better biography than Plutarch, or Lockhart or even, than John Morley, or Forster, and yet had no higher gifts for such work than they? Surely such absurdity cannot be tolerated. Croker, who according to the critics, with whom I do not agree, came as near to spoiling Boswell's book as an editor could come, has a multitude of notes, in which he undertakes to expose Boswell's absurdities, extravagancies, and inaccuracies, but Macaulay says that not one statement made by Croker can be accepted without corroboration, and this wise man who attempted to improve the fool's book, has drawn the thunders of wrath from Macaulay and Carlyle even more, if possible, than the fool himself.

I note that Boswell was the friend of America, and freely

criticised Johnson's "Taxation no Tyranny," a furious attack on the Colonies, and the worst thing in every way that Johnson ever wrote. I cite Boswell's closing remarks about Johnson as containing an admirable, just and acute analysis and summary of Johnson's character. His long book is written, if not brilliantly, at least well. Its contents are precisely what we most wish to know about Johnson; its statements of fact are, as a rule, accurate, and are always meant to be so. The author says many things that are in bad taste or undignified, usually about himself, nevertheless his judgments of other men and of affairs are intelligent and just, and invariably frank. His vanity and his frankness are far less offensive, to me at least, than the same qualities as displayed in Rousseau's "Confessions."

We accept this man's statements, adopt and use his judgments, read his book with unalloyed pleasure, and frequent edification, and call him a fool. We read eagerly everything he tells us of Johnson, and of other great men, and sneer at him as a toady. We owe him thanks and pay him contempt. In order to get their effect and to judge their value and justice, let us collect the Macaulay epithets. They are as follows: "One of the smallest men that ever lived; of the feeblest and meanest intellect; servile; impertinent; shallow; pedantic; bigoted; a blusterer; a common butt in London taverns; a tale bearer; an eavesdropper; a fool."

A collation of the Carlyle epithets suggests that one of these great Scotchmen read what the other had written about Boswell, and then collected all the unappropriated bad names in the dictionaries, or elsewhere discoverable, and discharged them upon his unhappy fellow Caledonian.

It is noticeable that the two great essayists do not use the same expletives, and that Carlyle, by virtue of his superior training in German, excels in compound objurgations. To him Boswell appears as "wine-bibber; gross liver; glutton (denunciations peculiarly fit to come from a dyspeptic); vain; heedless; a babbler; sychophant; braggadocio; coxcomb; inept; cock-nosed; bag-checked; shelf-mouthed; dew-lapped; sensual; pre-tentious; boisterous; imbecile; almost brutal."

In these two collections are some thirty words or phrases, condemnations, compound or single, as unpleasant as the decent part of our language can supply, and I believe only one instance of duplication. It is true that they are distributed over the mental, the moral, and the physical man; but this deluge of epithets, and these thunderings and lightnings of rhetoric, however diffused, are sufficient to sweep into contempt or oblivion, to crush, to obliterate an army of Boswells, — if only they be the real phenomena. Would it be high treason to intimate that they are in part stage productions, and that both the great essayist and historian, who knew everything, and the great moralist and philosopher, who delivered truth and wisdom copiously to two unheeding generations, came perilously near to surrendering justice and judgment to words in Boswell's case? In the passages quoted, Macaulay relents not at all, and Carlyle, while not meaning to be unjust, is unwilling apparently to abate a single sounding severe epithet.

Having ventured upon these dissents, it is proper, indeed necessary, that I protect myself with such authority as I can find. Among those not wholly unfriendly to Boswell was Sir Walter Scott, who lacked Carlyle's dyspepsia and call to preach, and Macaulay's infallibility and devotion to this phrase. Sir Leslie Stephen, and Mr. Edmund Gosse are among the more conspicuous writers of our own time, who have admitted that Boswell was a man of ability. Others might be cited, but I am content with these.

Later times have dealt with Boswell more kindly than his own generation and the two succeeding ones. Especially is this true of the more thoughtful and the more competent writers, and once more it must be said that the change is traceable to Carlyle's Essay. But the "general" public does not keep pace with the scholars and writers, and the day of final justice to Boswell is still distant. The verdict, at last, will be, not that he was a hero, but that he was a writer of great ability, indeed of unsurpassed ability in his specialty, and a man not entirely weak or bad, not weaker or worse, on the whole, than the average man of his own class in his own time. Remote times

may admit that he had many good qualities, possibly some admirable ones.

Finally, I remark that as this is a special plea for Boswell, and not intended to be judicial or impartial, it should be remembered that in such circumstances, it is the duty of the advocate to be oblivious, if possible, of the faults of his client, and undeterred by the eminence or number of adversary counsel, or the weight and dignity of opposing authority.

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